

Minutes: Board of Education
Committee to Implement the No Child Left Behind Act
Date: December 4, 2002

The committee convened to receive presentations and comments on reading education, the Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI), and the PALS test from Dr. Marcia Invernizzi of the University of Virginia and representatives from three public schools that are experiencing great success in their reading education programs.

Dr. Invernizzi reviewed the EIRI and the use of the PALS test as a screening tool for determining a student's eligibility for participation in the initiative. Schools may volunteer to participate in the initiative, and those that do receive incentive funding to provide 2 ½ hours per week of additional reading instruction for at-risk students with reading difficulties. At-risk students are determined based on the PALS assessment results. Currently, 98 percent of the school divisions participate in the EIRI. PALS testing is done in the spring of each year to identify students, and about 90 percent of schools re-screen after interventions have been provided to determine a student's progress and evaluate whether the interventions have been successful.

Dr. Invernizzi indicated that the EIRI and PALS present several challenges due to the current structure of the program. Specifically, the following four challenges were mentioned: (1) The program lacks the ability to follow students over time due to the unavailability of uniform identification numbers as the state educational agency and local educational agency levels and the inability to data bank information. (2) There are currently screening and reporting and instructional time compliance issues for school divisions, with nine to 20 percent of PALS scores not being reported and many schools failing to provide the complete 2 ½ hours of additional reading instruction. There is also confusion among school divisions regarding whether the provisions of Title I reading services and special education services fulfill the 2 ½ hour requirement. (3) There is currently no control over the quality of interventions and instruction. (4) A comparison group is not available to evaluate how students in the EIRI program perform in comparison to students who do not participate in the program.

Dr. Invernizzi indicated that relatively successful schools were identified using the following method:

- The difference between the PALS scores from Fall to Spring were determined for schools
- The scores were converted to standard scores
- The average change score was computed for each grade within schools
- The average change score was adjusted for regression to the mean
- Schools were ranked by the magnitude of the adjusted change score within grade levels.
- Schools with the highest rankings were those schools with the highest free lunch counts and lowest Fall Summed Scores.

A telephone questionnaire and survey was conducted of those schools with the highest rankings. The survey asked:

- Who conducted the PALS screening?
- Who entered the scores?
- Who saw the reports?
- How did they use the PALS data?
- Who provided the additional instruction?

The survey results indicated that in the successful schools:

- Classroom teachers always screen their own students and enter the scores on the web.
- Teachers and principals use, share, and discuss the reports on the web.
- Teachers use PALS data to plan instruction, form reading groups, and adjust instruction to meet individual needs.
- Principals use PALS data to identify curricular weaknesses.
- Intervention is provided daily for a minimum of 2 ½ hours of additional instruction per week.
- Interventions start immediately and continue all year, sometimes into the summer months.
- The weakest students receive additional instruction.
- They use both one-on-one and small-group instruction.
- More intense intervention is provided for students who do not show progress during the year.
- Flexible and creative scheduling is used to accommodate different levels of need.
- On-going team meetings and professional development activities focusing on reading instruction are conducted.
- Curriculum and instruction is focused on the components assessed by PALS.
- Content of staff development, curriculum, classroom instruction, and intervention all consist of:
 - Phonological Awareness
 - Word Study for Phonics, Spelling, Word Recognition, and Vocabulary
 - Reading Fluency
 - Comprehension

Successful schools recommended the following:

- The state needs to better monitor schools to ensure that the principal (or Literacy Coordinator) is aware of how to use PALS data to guide classroom instruction.
- The state needs to clarify whether or not Title I and special education services count as additional instruction.
- The number of instructional days in the school year needs to be increased.
- High-quality staff development in how to differentiate reading instruction needs to be provided.
- The amount of funding for the EIRI needs to be increased.
- School divisions should not reduce resources when individual schools are improving.

Dr. Invernizzi recommended the following:

- A policy that addresses the budgetary commitment and guidelines and communication regarding who should perform the screening and when interventions should take place
- Implementation guidance regarding
 - How to use literacy data to inform instruction
 - Interventions development
 - Planning, educating, monitoring based on the PALS
 - Modeling instruction and providing feedback on practice

After Dr. Invernizzi's presentation, representatives from Clark Elementary School in Charlottesville City, Ginter Park Elementary School in Richmond City, and Mount Vernon Elementary School in Alexandria City provided the committee with information regarding the success of the reading programs at their respective institutions. Each program emphasized the need to schedule and preserve certain amounts of time focused on reading instruction and illustrated how those practices listed in the survey were being implemented in those schools.

After the presentations the Board of Education president expressed his support for putting the EIRI into the Standards of Quality.

Dr. Cheri Magill, director of accreditation at the Department of Education, provided the committee with an update on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and reviewed the methodology for calculating AYP starting points.

Dr. Cynthia Cave, director of policy at the Department of Education, provided the committee with an update of the persistently dangerous schools requirements from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.